

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF SUFFIXATION IN THE IDOMA LANGUAGE

By

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Abstract

This paper titled, 'a descriptive analysis of suffixation in the *Ídóma* language' described suffixation in the language, to ascertain the role of suffixation and how it affects meaning in the language. Data for the study were collected through interview with competent native speakers of Idoma from *Ọtukpo* Local Government. The researcher used her intuitive knowledge as a native speaker of *Ídóma* to validate the data. Data for the study were presented in rows, featuring the *Ídóma* lexemes with a Leipzig's one-to-one correspondence glossing in English for a clear understanding. The data were analyzed based on the objectives of the study. The study adopted the theory of Construction Morphology. It discovered that the *Ídóma* language features suffixation processes, which include: -kum, 'my', -m, 'my', -nu, 'his' etc. The study also discovered that these suffixes are inflectional which are used in indicating possession in *Ídóma*; while others are

derivational, such as -lum, 'me' and -n,'not' these are used to expand the meaning of lexemes. The study found out that the suffix -n is used for deriving negations of verbs in Ídóma. It recommends that more work in Ídóma language morphology should be done to enrich its structure. The study contributes a formal linguistic analysis of suffixation in Ídóma to the body of literature in Ídóma language.

Keywords: Affixation, morphology, root, suffixation, suffix,

Introduction

Morphological structure of languages features affixation either as a derivational process or/and inflectional process. In view of the above feature of languages in the world, affixation is considered to be operational in many languages, including Idoma language. The morphological structure of Idoma allows for the affixation of roots for inflection and derivation. This affixation can take place before a root, in the heart of a root or after a root; therefore; it can be said that the morphological structure of Idoma features prefixation, infixation and suffixation.

Owing to the nature of the processes of suffixation in Idoma it is important to explicate the concepts of affixation and suffixation since suffixation is a type of affixation. Affixation is the process whereby new words are formed through the addition of morphemes; these morphemes could be added at the beginning, middle or the end of the root or base. Owing to the expansion of words in the Idoma language, it can be said that affixes in Idoma modify or specify the meaning of the base word or, better still, an affix in Idoma is associated with specific semantic features and contributes to the overall meaning of the word.

In a bid to define affixation, Crystal (2008:314) asserts that affixation is 'the morphological process whereby grammatical or lexical information is added to a stem.' Crystal further states that affixes are limited in numbers in languages and are generally classified into three types, depending on the position with reference to the root or stem of the word. In a similar vein, Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:11) posits that affixation is 'the morphological process whereby bound morphemes are attached to a root or stem to mark changes in meaning,

parts of speech or grammatical relationship.’ In the words of Ballard (2001:105), affixation is ‘the process whereby bound morphemes (other than roots) are added to bases, either word-initially or word finally to form new words.’

Umera-Okeke and Nwankwo (2011) view affixation as the addition of prefixes and suffixes to the root word or base with or without a change of the word class. These prefixes and suffixes are called affixes and they are bound morphemes that are added to the base morphemes to form or words or mark inflection. The fact that prefixes and suffixes are just a combination of two, three or four letters, they have meaning and they are morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of a word (Fudeman (2011).

Suffixation is a type of affixation that features the attachment of an affix at the end of a word. In English, it is a highly productive mechanism for changing the grammatical function of words from singular to plural or the grammatical categories of words (Quirk & Greenbaum, 2000). For example: dog (singular) - dogs (plural) correct (adjective) correctness (noun). This shows that affixation can result in change of number if the inflectional affix is attached to a base, and it can also result in change of meaning and word class if the derivational affix is attached to a base. From the above discouse, it can be stated that suffixation is the morphological process of attaching an affix to a base at the final position of the base. Considering the presence of suffixation in Idoma, the study deems it fit to describe the suffixation processes in the language.

Statement of the problem

Studies have been carried out on Idoma morphology by Abah and Ogenyi (2024), Achadu, Agbedo and Iloene (2016), and Owojecho, (2017), however, available studies at the disposal of the researcher do not describe the inflectional and derivational features of suffixation in Idoma. So, to fill the knowledge gap, this study sets out to examine the suffixation processes in Idoma language.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the suffixation processes in Idoma,

and the objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. Identify and describe suffixation in the Idoma language.
- ii. Find out how suffixation affects meaning in Idoma.
- iii. Ascertain the function of suffixation in Idoma language.

Empirical review

Abah and Ogenyi (2024) conducted a study on contrastive analysis of noun formation in the English and Idoma languages. The aim of the study was to investigate the peculiarities of the functional and structural formation of nouns in the English and Idoma languages. Robert Lado's Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was adopted for the study. Data for the study were elicited from both primary and secondary sources. The similarities and differences between the English and the Idoma languages were descriptively examined through the use of tables and glossaries. The findings of the study revealed that the English and Idoma languages have some common structural features, such as kinds of noun, genders of noun, free morphemes, and the two languages equally share some morphological processes such as compounding and clipping, but the Idoma language has its regular inflection as a prefix. The English language has zero morphemes unlike the Idoma language. The previous study was concerned with contrasting noun formation in English and Idoma whereas the present study is concerned with examining the suffixation processes in Idoma.

Owojecho, (2017) studied *morpho-syntax of plural formation in the Idoma language*. The study aimed at establishing the formal properties of inflectional plural marking in the Idoma language. This study was conducted by using both primary and secondary data. The study established that plurality is marked via prefixation, mutation, quantifiers, and cardinal numerals. The study further demonstrated that non-human nouns can be construed as singular or plural in the sentence depending on the verb in such sentences. The study therefore, proposed rules to explain subject-verb agreement in the language. The study also established that adjectives can also express plurality on morphologically singular nouns via reduplication. The previous study focused on the morpho-syntax of plural formation in the Idoma language while the present study examines the suffixation processes

in Ídóma

Achadu, Agbedo and Iloene (2016) studied *inflection as a morphological process in the Ídóma language* using the descriptive approach. The objectives of the study were to examine inflection as a morphological process in Ídóma and to investigate whether verbs constitute a veritable source of inflectional processes in the Ídóma language and to establish the various ways which words inflect to denote such grammatical functions as time (tense/aspect) and plurality. The findings of the study show that Ídóma verbs constitute a veritable source of inflection in the language. In Ídóma, affixes are used to mark tense and aspect without inflecting the grammatical function. Also, the future and future progressive tenses are represented by the same prefixes *m/nge* 'I will' and also, verb inflection is achieved through affixation *ò le ewú nmò e* in the language. The study also reveals the various ways which words inflect to denote grammatical functions. These include person, genitive possessive case and number. The previous study treated inflection as a morphological process in the Ídóma language, whereas the present study focuses on the suffixation processes in Ídóma.

Research methodology

The study adopted a descriptive approach since it involves describing the suffixation processes in Ídóma. Data for the study were collected by consulting native speakers of Ídóma from Otukpo Local Government Area who were chosen based on their commendable academic backgrounds and have a good command of the Ídóma language as native speakers. The researcher used her intuitive knowledge as a native speaker of Ídóma to validate the data. The study employed interview as the instrument for collecting the data because it would provide the avenue for the researcher to interact with the chosen native speakers of Ídóma in order to obtain quality data for the study. The researcher was guided during the consultations by a prepared list of items used during the interactions. The researcher used mobile phone to record the interview sessions, besides, a 40-leave exercise book and biro were used for taking down some points during the interview sessions.

Data for the study are presented in rows featuring the Ídóma lexemes with a Leipzig's one -to- one correspondence glossing rule in English

for a clear understanding. The data are analysed based on the objectives of the study. In order to support the analysis, construction morphology theory which aims at a better understanding of the relation between syntax, morphology, and lexicon, and the semantic properties of complex words was adopted for the study to describe the concatenation of morphemes in the structure of complex words in Idoma. Considering the aforementioned tenets of the theory, it was used to explicate the relationship between roots and suffixes in Idoma.

Data presentation and analysis

In addition, the suffixes in Idoma are mostly used to show ownership, definiteness, negation and identification. Owing to the above functions of suffixes in Idoma, it can be said that those suffixes in Idoma that change meaning are derivational while those that show genitive case are inflectional presented in table as follows:

Table 1; -Kum in Idoma language can be used to show possession an ownership with everything, but not human.

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
1a.	--Kum	Ikpó	Leg	Ikpó-kum	My leg
1b.	=Kum	Aklọ	Side	Aklọkúm	My side
1c.	-Kum	ije	Money	Ijèkum	My money
1d.	-Kum	Ọkpá	Book	Ọkpákum	My book
1e.	-Kum	Ewó	Dog	éwokum	My dog
1f.	-Kum	ègbe	Gun	ègbékum	My gun
1g.	-Kum	Ikpé	Head	eikpékum	My head
1h.	-Kum	Ábọ	Hand	Ábọkum	My hand
1i.	-Kum	Igèlé	Bicycle	Igèlékum	My bicycle
1j.	-Kum	Uká	Chair	Ukákum	My chair

The affixation in 1a changes the morphological shape and grammatical role of the root 'Ikpó'. The nominal root *Ikpó* which means 'leg' takes the suffix *-kum*, 'my' to become *Ikpó-kum* which means 'my leg'. This implies that in Idoma, *kum* is a possessive suffix in Idoma for showing that an object belongs to the speaker. The affixation in 1b changes the morphological shape and number of the root 'aklọ'. The nominal root

‘aklo’ which means ‘side’, The nominal root changed its shape with the addition of the suffix morpheme *-kum* which becomes *aklokúm* which means ‘my side’. This implies that in Idoma, *kum*. is a possessive suffix in Idoma for showing that an object belongs to the speaker. In a similar vein, suffixation in 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i and 8j brings about a change in the meaning of the nouns by showing possession. The concatenation of the root with the suffix *-kum* for marking possession in nouns conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 2; -M ‘My’ suffixes is mostly used to show ownership for human

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
2a.	-M	éné	Mother	eném	My mother
2b.	-M	Ọyá	Wife	Ọyàm	My wife
2c.	-M	Abo	Hand	Abom	My hand
2d.	-M	Adá	Father	adám	My father
2e.	-M	Ọba	Husband	Ọbum	My husband

The suffixation in 2a changes the morphological shape and grammatical role of the nominal root ‘éné’. The nominal root ‘éné’ which means ‘mother’ changed its shape with the addition of the suffix morpheme, *-m*, which becomes *eném*, meaning ‘my mother’. This implies that *-m* is a possessive suffix in Idoma for showing that an object belongs to the speaker. The affixation in 2b changes the morphological shape and grammatical role of the root ‘oyá’. The nominal root ‘oyá’ which means ‘wife’ changed its shape with the addition of the suffix morpheme, *-m*, becomes *oyàm* which means ‘my wife’. This implies that in Idoma, *-m* is a possessive suffix in Idoma for showing that an object belongs to the speaker. In a similar vein, suffixation in 2c, 2d, and 2e brings about a change in the meaning of the nouns by showing possession. The concatenation of the root with the suffix *-m* for marking possession in nouns conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 3; nu suffixes: The suffix is used for showing ownership

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
3a.	-nu	Ọnyá	wife	Ọyánu	His wife
3b.	=nu	Ọba	husband	Ọbunu	Her husband
3c.	-nu	Ọyi	child	Ọyinu	His child
3d.	-nu	Ọlé	house	Ọlum	His house
3e.	-nu	Ọya	friend	Ọyánu	His friend
3f.	-nu	ehọ	farm	ehọnu	His farm

The suffixation in 3a changes the morphological shape and grammatical function of the nominal root 'onyá'. The nominal root 'onyá', which means 'wife', takes the suffix -nu, 'his' becoming *onyánu* - 'his wife'. This implies that -nu is a possessive marker which shows ownership. The affixation in 6b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the nominal root 'oba'. The nominal root 'oba' which means 'husband', taking the suffix -nu becomes *obanu* which means 'her husband'. This implies that -nu is a possessive marker which shows ownership. In a similar vein, the suffixation in 3c, 3d, 3e, and 3f brings about a change in the meaning of the nouns by showing ownership. The concatenation of the root with the suffix -nu for showing ownership conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 4; The -á suffix 'The' is used to denotes the determiner case and definiteness

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
4a.	-á	Oyi	Child	oyiá	The child
4b.	-á	Uká	Chair	Ukáá	The Chairs
4c.	-á	Ọdúlé	Food	Ọduléá	The food
4d.	-á	Ọkpa	Book	Ọkpáá	The book
4e.	-á	Ifú	Mouse	Ifúá	The mouse
4f.	-á	Abo	Hand	áboá	The hand
4g.	-á	Apa	Lizard	apáá	The lizard
4h.	-á	Ọbla	Cat	Ọbláá	The cat
4i.	-á	eje	Drink	ejeá	The drink

The suffixation in 4a changes the morphological shape and meaning

of the nominal root 'oyi'. The nominal root 'oyi' which means 'child' taking the suffix -á, 'the' becomes *oyiá* which means 'the child'. This implies that -á is a determiner which limits the meaning of the noun to a specific child. The affixation in 3b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the nominal root 'uká'. The nominal root 'uká' which means 'chair' taking the suffix - á becomes *ukáá* which means 'the chair'. This implies that -á, is a determiner which limits the meaning of the noun to a specific chair. In a similar vein, suffixation in 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h, and 3i brings about a change in the meaning of the nouns by limiting their meanings. The concatenation of the root with the suffix {-á} for limiting the meaning of nouns conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 5; néé suffix 'it's - focus marker in answering question where the object is specific. It use to shown definiteness

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
5a	-néé	Ije	Money	Ijenéé	It's money
5b.	-néé	Abo	hand	Abonéé	It's hand
5c.	-néé	Okpa	book	Okpanéé	It's book
5d.	-néé	Eho	farm	ewonéé	It's farm
5e.	-néé	Uká	Chair	Ukanéé	It's chair

The suffixation in 5a changes the morphological shape and meaning of the nominal root 'Ije'. The nominal root 'Ije' which means 'money' taking the suffix -néé, 'It's' becomes *ijenéé* which means 'it's money'. This implies that -néé is an identifying suffix which answers a question about identity of objects. The affixation in 4b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the nominal root 'abo'. The nominal root 'abo' which means 'hand' taking the suffix -néé becomes *abonéé* which means 'it's hand'. This implies that -néé is an identifying suffix which answers a question about identity of objects. In a similar vein, suffixation in 5c, 5d, 5e, and 5f brings about a change in the meaning of the nouns by answering a question about the identity of objects. The concatenation of the root with the suffix -néé, for answering a question about the identity of objects conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 6; nee is used for possession and this suffixation attracts double suffixes: {-m} and {-nee}. The suffix {-m} ‘my’ is used for possession and {-nee} ‘it’s’ as focus.

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed Word	Gloss
6a.	=néé	éné	mother	enemnéné	It’s my mother.
6b.	-néé	adá	father	adamnéé	It’s his/her father.
6c.	-néé	oyi	child	oyimnéé	It’s my child.
6d.	-néé	ɔkpá	book	ɔkpámnéné	It’s my book.
6e.	-néé	ole	house	olemnéné	It’s my house.
6f.	-néé	ijé	money	ijémnéé	It’s my money.

The double suffixation in 6a changes the morphological shape and meaning of the nominal root ‘éné’. The nominal root ‘éné’ which means ‘mother’, by taking the suffixes –néé, it’s and –m, ‘my’ becomes *enemnéné* which means ‘It’s my mother’. This implies that –néé, is an identifying suffix which answers a question about identity of objects while {-m} is a possessive suffix. The double suffixation in 6b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the nominal root ‘adá’. The nominal root ‘adá’ which means ‘father’, by taking the suffix –néé, becomes *adamnéé* which means ‘it’s my father’. This implies that –néé, is an identifying suffix which answers a question about identity of objects while –m, is a possessive suffix. In a similar vein, suffixation in 6c, 6d, 6e, and 6f brings about a change in the meaning of the nouns by answering a question about the identity of objects and marking possession in the nouns. The concatenation of the root with the suffix –néé, for answering a question about the identity of objects conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 7; The gam ‘me’ suffix is dialectal suffix. The suffix {-gam} is used to denote objects in the first-person category.

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
7a.	-gam	jéé	give	jéégam	give me
7b.	-gam	béé	hold	bégam	hold in for me
7c.	-gam	ká	talk	kágam	talk to me
7d.	-gam	yéé	walk	yéégam	walk for me

7e.	-gam	yáá	do	yáágam	do for me
74f.	-gam	pó	hear	pógam	hear for me
7g.	-gam	máfú	show	máfugam	show it to me

The affixation in 7a changes the morphological shape and meaning of the verbal root 'jéé'. The verbal root 'jéé' which means 'give', taking the suffix -gam, 'me' becomes *jéégam* which means 'give me'. This implies that -gam, is a meaning changing suffix which attaches the object to verbal roots in Idoma. The affixation in 7b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the verbal root 'béé'. The verbal root 'béé' which means 'hold' changed its shape with the addition of the suffix morpheme -gam, becoming *béégam*, meaning 'hold it for me'. This implies that -gam is a meaning changing suffix which attaches the object to verbal roots in Idoma. In a similar vein, the suffixation in 7c, 7d, 7e, 7f and 7g brings about a change in the meaning of the verbs by attaching the object to the verbal root. The concatenation of the root with the suffix -gam for attaching the object to the verbal roots conforms to the claim by Booji (2010) in Construction Morphology that a complex word is a product of concatenation of morphemes.

Table 8; The lum 'me' suffix: The suffix {-lum} is used to denote objects in the first person category.

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed Word	Gloss
8a.	-lum	má	see	malum	help me to see
8b.	-lum	mafú	show	mafulum	show me
8c.	-lum	po	hear	polum	hear for me
8d.	-lum	ka	talk	kalum	talk to me
8e.	-lum	ya	do	yalum	do it for me
8f.	-lum	mo	see	molum	see it for me
8g.	-lum	bée	hold	belum	hold it for me
8h.	-lum	já	give	jálum	give it to me

The affixation in 8a changes the morphological shape and meaning of the verbal root 'ma'. The verbal root 'ma', which means 'see', changed its shape with the addition of the suffix morpheme -lum, 'me' becomes *malum* which means 'help me to see'. This implies that -lum is a meaning changing suffix which attaches the object to verbal roots in

Idoma. The affixation in 15b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the verbal root ‘mafú’. The verbal root ‘mafú’ which means ‘show’, taking the suffix –gam becomes *mafulum* which means ‘show me’. This implies that -lum is a meaning changing suffix which attaches the object to verbal roots in Idoma. In a similar vein, the suffixation in 15c, 8d, 8e, 8f, 8g and 8h brings about a change in the meaning of the verbs by attaching the object to the verbal root.

Table 9; n ‘not’ – suffix is used to negate lexical terms or phrases or clauses. It appears at the end of the item or structures its negation. The n suffix is used to show negation.

	Suffix	Root	Gloss	Affixed word	Gloss
9a.	-n	lé	eat	lén	do not eat
9b.	-n	je	know	jen	do not know
9c.	-n	wa	come	wán	do not come
9d.	-n	po	hear	pon	do not hear
9e.	-n	ka	talk	kan	do not talk

The affixation in 9a changes the morphological shape and meaning of the verbal root ‘lé’. The verbal root ‘lé’ which means ‘eat’, taking the suffix –n ‘not’ becomes *lén* which means ‘do not eat’. This implies that -n is a meaning changing suffix which attaches negation to the verbal root ‘le’. The affixation in 9b changes the morphological shape and meaning of the verbal root ‘je’. The verbal root ‘je’ which means ‘know’, taking the suffix -n becomes *jen* which means ‘do not know’. This implies that -n is a meaning changing suffix which attaches negation to the verbal root ‘je’. In a similar vein, the suffixation in 9c, 9d, 9e and 9f brings about a change in the meaning of the verbs by attaching negation to the verbal roots.

Conclusion

The study discovered that the Idoma language features suffixation processes, which include: -kum, -m,-nu,-á, -néé, -gam -lum and -n. The study also discovered that of the above suffixes: -kum, -m and -nu inflectional suffixes which are used for showing possession in Idoma. On the other hand, the study found out that -á, -néé, -gam, -lum and -n are derivational suffixes in Idoma whereby –á is used for showing

particularity or definiteness in nouns in Idoma while -néé is used for identification in Idoma.; -gam -lum and -n are used to expand the meaning of lexemes by deriving phrases from words. Finally, the study found out that the suffix -n is used for deriving negative forms of verbs in Idoma. The study contributes a formal linguistic analysis of suffixation in Idoma to the body of literature on the Idoma morphology. In a similar vein, the study expands the body of literature on the Idoma grammar.

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